

# Salinity and the Water Board

## Part 1

The Regulatory approach to  
protecting the beneficial uses  
of water in the Central Valley





# Guidance Memo Objectives

DATE:

**SUBJECT: Management Guidance for Salinity in Waste Discharge Requirements**

## SUMMARY

The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) adopted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Regional Board), set forth water quality objectives and implementation policies with respect to salinity. The Regional Board has stated in the Basin Plan its policy that control of salinity is a high priority. Salinity issues in waste discharge requirements (WDRs) and NPDES permits (Permits) should be treated consistently, that is similar situations should be addressed in a similar manner. WDRs and Permits need to clearly address salinity issues – a determination must be made on whether a salinity problem exists for the specific discharge, final discharge effluent limits generally imposed, and compliance time schedules prescribed. Salinity reduction from controllable factors should be sought as soon as possible with efforts beginning immediately. It is recognized that some salinity problems may require many years to resolve. Salinity studies and control need not await rewriting of a WDR/Permit. Studies and action plans can be required under Section 13267 to begin salinity work and to have a control plan available when WDRs/Permits are prepared.

## DISCUSSION

This Memorandum summarizes the the general approach to regulation of salinity in WDRs/Permits under the current policies, laws and regulations that govern the Regional

# Not New Policy

- Guidance helps staff regulate salinity consistent with Basin Plans and applicable laws and prior Board policies
- Guidance based on existing policies which may not have been fully or consistently applied over time

# Existing policies

- SB Resolution #68-16  
(State anti-degradation policy)
- Basin Plans
  - Narrative and numeric objectives
  - Implementation policies

By 30 March 2006, the Discharger shall submit a *Background Groundwater* proposing numerical groundwater limitations that will implement the above limitations at the existing WWTF site. For each groundwater monitoring parameter, the report shall present a summary of the background monitoring data and groundwater quality to that in wells made using the method from at least eight consecutive monitoring events. For each monitoring parameter/constituent, the report shall show concentrations for compliance monitoring wells with: (1) the calculated background and (2) the proposed numerical limitation.

By 30 June 2006, the Discharger shall submit a *Phase 1 90% Design Report* specifications, and a *Construction Quality Assurance Plan* for all Phase 1 improvements. The report shall demonstrate that the Groundwater Limitations and describe the disposal capacity is a water balance model shall be submitted.

By 30 December 2006, the Discharger shall submit a *Hydrogeologic Investigation* project has been awarded.

By 30 April 2007, the Discharger shall submit the *Hydrogeologic Investigation* Evaluation Report that documents implementation of the approved workplan discharge of treated effluent at the selected off-site disposal area will ensure Groundwater Limitations.

## Guidance does not change existing requirements

## Board must implement and enforce State and Board Policy

# Intent of the Guidance

- Require identification of salt sources
- Develop alternative salt control practices
- Implement salinity control measures
- Develop site specific information and develop appropriate effluent or receiving water limits

# General Approach

- A determination will be made if the discharge has a salinity problem
- Effluent limits will be imposed and time schedules prescribed where necessary
- Salinity reduction from controllable factors will be sought
- Participation in developing information and comprehensive long term plan



# Summary

- Regional Board will consistently consider potential salinity impacts and affected beneficial uses when drafting or updating all WDRs & permits.
- Regional Board is committed to motivate dischargers to take every opportunity to implement salinity control measures.
- Some salinity problems can only be remedied by a long-term commitment to a solution process.